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ABSTRACT

There are several things that English teachers at all educational levels need to know about linguistics. They must know, for example, that the terms "grammar," "dialect," and "register" have special meanings for the linguist. In addition, they must know the following: (1) regardless of language, a normal child will begin to speak at about 18 months and will have the grammar of the language mastered by about five and one half years; (2) all languages have noun-like and verb-like elements and there is no language that lacks the mechanisms of grammar; (3) a knowledge of linguistics provides a description of how English grammar works; (4) scientific techniques can be used to analyze a body of linguistic behaviors; (5) the history of the English language can provide answers to questions about language usage; (6) reading works perceptually and cognitively; (7) by the age of six years, children are equipped to perform inductive analysis of language; (8) language can be used to manipulate people; (9) linguistics is the most basic of all subjects; and (10) teachers should turn to linguists when they have a language problem in their classrooms. (FL)

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NEVER MIND THE TREES: WHAT AN ENGLISH TEACHER REALLY NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT LINGUISTICS

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In any discussion of linguistics for non-linguists it seems necessary to begin with a mention of Noam Chomsky, the reason being that Chomsky serves as the same sort of symbol in linguistics that General Motors does in the world of automobiles. And it's not really possible to say *anything* about the implications of linguistics for education, or its use in education, without first getting out of the way Noam Chomsky's famous alleged objection to any such thing ever taking place.

It is standard procedure to claim that the formal teaching of grammar is useless, and every teacher with students who have spent twelve years or so "studying grammar" knows precisely how ineffective that study has usually been. People who want to ensure that classes in the language arts will *not* be devoted to the teaching of grammar inevitably declare that Noam Chomsky said that teaching grammar is a waste of time, and that furthermore, he saw no particular application of linguistics per se to the language arts classroom.

It's true that Chomsky did say that. It's been a very long time since he said it--a fact almost never taken into account--but even if the statement stood unchanged, there are a couple of things that would have to be said about it.

In the first place, it is always quoted out of context, without any consideration for what Chomsky might have meant by the remarks. What Chomsky meant first of all was that he didn't feel there was any place in the language arts classroom for the *formal* mechanisms--the trees, the brackets, the squiggles, the structural descriptions and structural indexes, the mathy-looking rules--all the things that look more like predicate calculus than they look like language. These, he felt, had no relevance for the ordinary language arts classroom, and I agree with him. I couldn't agree with him more. A classic example of the futility of that sort of thing was the *Roberts English Series*, which had the best of intentions, and which

not only was an utter failure in most classrooms but served primarily to convince English teachers that they would lay their bodies before bulldozers before they would ever allow anything even vaguely tainted with linguistics into their classrooms again. Chomsky was quite right.

The problem with formalisms in linguistics is that they change constantly. Unlike $e=mc^2$, or the rate at which a falling body plunges toward the earth, they are *not* constants; and anyone who wanted to find out what the current position is on, say, the passive transformation, would have to call MIT and ask for a statement as of 12 o'clock noon. Even then, it would be like the weather forecast, in that one could not be certain that current status would still hold thirty minutes later. The evanescence--the transience--of linguistic formalisms is the most sweeping endorsement of the correctness of what Chomsky said that anyone could possibly ask for. It is not possible to print any set of "rules" that will be useful long enough for the list to get into print--it simply can't be done. And that in itself is a proof of another claim which I would like to make, and which is theoretically X-rated: that the formalisms are the most *trivial* part of linguistic theory. They are something that linguists play with; we find that fun to do. Unless you are a linguist, you are not going to find them worth your time.

The second thing that Chomsky meant was that he was convinced that the unconscious grammatical principles which people know, if made conscious, would be of no real use to them. That is, if a person knew what was going on in his head when he produced sentences, in the sense that he could state it overtly, he would be no better off in terms of his language behavior and performance than he was before he achieved that state of awareness. Now it has simply been taken for granted that Chomsky was correct in this matter. However, an experiment in which I participated with Dr. Shirley Rush at San Diego State University in 1975-76 was put together to test that claim of Chomsky's, and a very expensive statistical analysis of its results convinced me overwhelmingly that he was wrong--that at least for today's students the overt understanding of the grammatical rules they are using, all unaware, leads directly to improvement in literacy skills. A significant amount of research carried on by my graduate students and others since that time, with the cooperation of the American Language Program and Study Skills Department at SDSU, has reinforced me in that conviction. That is, however, a subject for a different paper, and is not the aspect of Chomsky's remarks that people ordinarily have in mind when they use him as backup for objection to classroom grammar and/or linguistics instruction.

With Chomsky out of the way we can move on to a discussion of what good linguistics really *is*, and what it is useful *for*.

The big problem with something like this is that there are literally hundreds of things--none of them tree structures-- that one might say the English teacher ought to know about linguistics. It thus be-

comes necessary to reduce this enormous number to a manageable, finite quantity. A baker's dozen seems appropriate, and so I have picked the thirteen things in linguistics that seem to me to be most necessary for the English teacher at whatever level. I genuinely do feel that these things are just as necessary for the kindergarten teacher as they are at the college and adult level, and that they apply across the board, with an obvious necessity for teachers to adapt them to their student population. I'm not going to list them in any particular order of priority, except that the one I mention last is probably first, and is placed to take advantage of the principle of recency in memory.

1. The first thing the teacher should know is *what a grammar is.* The *Harbrace Handbook* is not a grammar. So far as I know, no grammar has ever been written down. Little pieces of grammars here and there do exist; they are written primarily in either impenetrable symbols or impenetrable verbiage, if they are at all accurate. And if they are not written in that fashion-- which means that they have not been written by linguists--they are primarily myths and distortions. Both kinds, therefore, are useless to the teacher.

A grammar, for a linguist, is *a set of rules in a person's head that determines that person's language behavior.* And by "language behavior" linguists mean a number of things that people are not accustomed to considering as part of grammar--such as facial expression, intonation of the voice, how far away from people one stands when talking, how one knows when it is his turn to talk, and a whole lot of other stuff that is often called "nonverbal behavior." The rules for all of those things are fully systematic, are inside people's heads, and they also constitute grammar.

It happens that every person has a grammar which is just a little bit different from anybody else's--grammars are like snowflakes--and we all sort of get together and decide on what things we have enough in common to call a language. That *internal* grammar determines your language behavior in *spite* of what may turn up in the *Harbrace Handbook*, so that people are able to read and write their languages, and to speak and understand them, even in the face of having memorized and passed tests over dreadful lies which they have been *taught* were their "grammar." (I should point out that although I keep referring to the *Harbrace Handbook*, I do so only because it--like Chomsky--is a convenient symbol; my remarks apply equally to any usage manual or grammar text you wish to substitute.) It's absolutely astonishing and I'm going to give an example of a grammar lie a little farther along in this paper.

2. The second thing teachers need to know is *what a dialect is.* Now I said that everybody has a grammar a little different from everybody else's--there's a term for that, too, the term "idiolect." But when a group of speakers feel that they have enough in common that they really all talk the *same* way, we're talking about a dialect. Everybody has a dialect. The popular conception of "dialect" as "a

funny way that other people talk" is not accurate; a dialect is simply a set of grammars which, once again, determine the language behavior of a particular group of people.

The term *grammatical* is very difficult to apply within linguistics, because it means "an utterance, spoken or signed or written, which is produced in accordance with the rules of the individual's dialect." If it happens that that dialect contains rules for the generation of such sentences as "I ain't got nothing to say on this subject," then that utterance is fully grammatical. The term *grammatical* as it is used in our schools means, of course: in accordance with the so-called rules of a dialect that nobody speaks and the use of which is confined entirely to academic situations. This dialect is often called Standard English. It would more accurately be named Standard Written Academic English, since it does not exist at all as a spoken form; and in fact its use is so limited that "Academic Regalian" provides the most accurate label of all. The grammar of that dialect is as undefined as any other; that is, nowhere can one find a list of the rules for its use.

3. The third thing an English teacher needs to know is *what a register is.* A register is also a set of rules in the head, but it is a set of rules which can be counted upon to produce a type of verbal behavior tied to a specific social situation. Perhaps the easiest way to remember "register" is to think of the common registers that kids have. When a kid says goodbye to the teacher, he says "Goodbye, Mrs. Jones." When he says goodbye to his mother, he says "See ya later, Mom." When he says goodbye to his friends, he says "Gotta split, man." These represent three registers: school, home, and street. The ability to move back and forth among registers is a survival skill; and the more registers one commands, and the more highly valued those registers are in one's culture, the more effectively one can communicate. When a register is written down, it is usually referred to as a "style."

4. The next thing an English teacher needs to know is what normal human language development is like. There is a great emphasis in our teacher training programs upon *abnormal* language behavior--often barbarously badly-defined--but all too rarely does anybody bother to tell you what normal language behavior is like. With the stipulation of the Ryan Act in California that English teachers must now take some linguistics, teacher candidates at some universities and colleges *are* exposed to a description of normal language development in the human being; but by no means is this universal. And certainly teachers who have been in service for a long time tend to have had little or no exposure to that body of information.

Teachers need to know that all over the world, no matter what language a child is exposed to, if the child has no deficiency that requires the attention of a medical expert, that child will begin to speak at about eighteen months and will have the grammar mastered by about age five and a half. This is true regardless of the language, and it makes it immediately obvious that there could not be some language which is intrinsically easier or harder to learn than another

language. If that were so--say we pick Russian and claim that Russian is much harder to learn than Spanish--we would have to admit that all Russian infants are more advanced in their language skills than infants who learn Spanish, or any other "easier" language, since Russian children function on the same timetable as do children learning any other language. And even if we were willing to accept that rather absurd assumption, it wouldn't help a great deal, since a child learns whatever language is being used in the environment around him. We would be left with no explanation for the child of Spanish parents who, growing up in a household where only Russian is spoken, goes right ahead and begins speaking Russian at eighteen months and has it under control by the age of five and a half.

It is certainly true that there are some individual variations--we have all heard of some child who began to speak at seven months or did not begin to speak until four years--but these are idiosyncratic variations, and they have no statistical significance.

If teachers are aware that all children learning a language go through well-defined developmental stages, and if--if only--they have some knowledge about what those stages are--they will have some basis for distinguishing between the child who needs help and the child who is simply at a normal stage of development. Take the child who says "wabbit" and "woses" and "I want the wed book." That child is consistently letting you know three things that he or she knows: (1) that at the beginning of those words there is a particular sound; (2) that it's always the same sound; and (3) that although perhaps he cannot yet *produce* that particular sound, he knows quite well what it ought to be. Such a child, if you say, "Did you say you wanted the ged book?" will become quite angry and insist that he said "the WED book," and that there should be no question about it. If, on the other hand, you came across a child who on one day said "wabbit" and on another "babbit" and yet another "labbit," then you would know that this was *not* normal, that children *don't* ordinarily do that, and that this is a child who needs some sort of expert attention.

5. The fifth thing that teachers need to know is *what human languages do, what they can be expected to do, worldwide.* If one wanted to pick a number for how many languages there are, five thousand is pretty safe. Estimates differ, because people draw boundaries between language and dialect in different ways. We have not examined every one of those five thousand languages in complete detail, but we have examined many hundreds of them, and we now know what sorts of things we can or can't expect to find in human languages.

Teachers need to know this so that when something comes up in their classrooms that they had not anticipated--because English doesn't do that, or French doesn't do that, or German or Spanish don't do that--they will not take it for an exotic aberration in the student but will realize that it is a logical development from the student's native speech. This is particularly necessary now, and particularly necessary in areas of the United States where teachers are facing students whose

native languages are *not* just English and Spanish and German, but Korean and Cambodian and Vietnamese and Navajo and Samoan, and so on.

Teachers need to know that what is a verb in one language may be a noun in another, and vice versa. They need to know that despite what they may have heard, all languages have noun-like elements and verb-like elements. They need to know that there are *no* primitive languages, and no languages that lack the usual mechanisms of grammar. They need to know that there are languages in which what are adjectives in English, or numerals in English, are *verbs*. That there are languages in which word order is extremely free, but none in which it is totally without constraint. That there are languages in which the verb "go" has more than 3700 separate forms. That there are languages in which nouns have no plural but that such languages nonetheless have a way to indicate plurality. That there are languages in which verbs bear no tense markers. That there are many, many languages in which there is no verb "be" except the rare existential one--no copula, in other words--and that this absence does not cause the culture using the language to collapse in total disarray. *All* these things they need to know about, in order that they may judge when it is perfectly logical for a student to have some sort of difficulty with a linguistic structure of English. They may then perhaps be able to predict some of those difficulties.

6. Sixth on my list: teachers need to know what linguistics can tell them about how English grammar really works. What we find in teachers is an aversion to teaching grammar in their classrooms, and I applaud them in that aversion, because it represents the knowledge they have, somewhere in their heart of hearts, that they are being asked to teach *lies*. They don't want to teach lies, their students don't want to learn them, and they haven't seen any evidence that forcing the process has ever done anyone any good yet. You look at any K-8 grammar series and you'll see that the grammar section gets thicker and thicker every year. *Not* because it is moving on to quantities of new and different material, but because it's necessary every year to repeat once again all the stuff that was not learned during the previous years. I am linguistic consultant right now for the production of a new series of this kind, and it distresses me very much that with each new volume we have to resort to more and more simplistic and inadequate treatment of *new* material because there has to be room in the book to start all over again--this is called review--with the first grammar rule in the very first volume: A sentence has a subject and a predicate. We wouldn't allow this kind of thing for a *moment* in any other subject except English; and it is bitterly ironic that the subject in which we do allow it is the one in which children arrive in our first-grade classrooms already magnificently equipped with accurate knowledge.

Now, let's take a look at one typical grammar lie, and let that serve as an example of the sort of thing I mean. (And if the term "lie" is bothering you, as it does bother many of my colleagues, we can make a substitution that I made in one of my books--we can call it a grammar *incantation*. That will remove the presupposed element of

deliberate distortion that accompanies the word "lie.") Let's look at that infamous entity, the English direct object.

Every student who comes into my classroom has been taught to recite this incantation: *the direct object is the receiver of the action.* It is true that in a sentence such as "John kicked the cat" the cat is the receiver of the action of the verb "kick," and anybody can see with his own eyes that that is true and that it makes sense to call it a direct object--although I must say that the term itself is completely opaque. But when we proceed to take a look at any group of English sentences with direct objects, we run into sentences like "I know the answer." We teach people that "the answer" is the direct object of the verb "know," and yet it is obvious that I can know an answer for my entire life without that answer being affected in any way whatsoever by my action or receiving it. And if a student starts poking into that mess, wanting to find out what's going on, the poor teacher will have to tell her that what's involved here is that "know" is a transitive verb. If the student looks in grammar handbooks for help, she'll find that a transitive verb is one that can take an object, and then when she looks at "object" she'll find that it's defined as something that can follow a transitive verb. This is *Lincoln, see Abraham*; and *Abraham, see Lincoln.*

It wouldn't hurt students to learn the truth about the English direct object; it really wouldn't. Its characteristics are perfectly well describable, and don't require any kind of squiggles. The direct object of English, in almost every case, has the following characteristics:

- it is to be found immediately to the right of the verb, in direct object *position;*

- it always answers the question "What was *verbed*?";

- it will either follow a verb whose transitivity is semantically obvious, like "kick"; a verb of emotion, like "love"; a verb of perception, like "see"; a verb of cognition, like "know"; or a verb of communication, like "tell";

- it will never begin with a preposition.

If we look at a sentence like "Mary knows the answer," "the answer" is direct object by virtue of the fact that it is in direct object position directly to the right of a verb of cognition, is preceded by no preposition, and answers the question "What was known?" The same tests hold for such sentences as "John loved Mary," "John saw the table," and "Mary told a story."

In putting together test questions we always have tricky ones with direct objects, and they do fool students. But they shouldn't.

If we take a look at a sentence like 'The cat was kicked by John,' it is indeed true that "John" is sitting there immediately to the right

of a semantically transitive verb; but "John" cannot possibly be the direct object because, first of all, the answer to "What got kicked?" is "the cat," not "John"; and secondly "John" is preceded by the preposition "by." When students want to know why there has to be a "by" in passive sentences, we don't have to tell them we don't know; we *do* know. It's there so we won't think the agent is a direct object.

The other common kind of trick question is the one in which we drag in the so-called *indirect* object--an even more opaque term than direct object--and give our poor testees something like "John gave Mary roses" to deal with. There's no reason why any student should be confused by a sentence like this. It is true that "Mary" is sitting there immediately to the right of the verb "give"; but the answer to "What was given?" is not "Mary," and any native speaker of English knows that. Furthermore, if the student tries to figure out which of those chunks *could* have a preposition before it, she will find that while it is odd, it is possible to say "John gave to Mary roses" but "John gave Mary to roses" is absolutely out of the question. Therefore Mary cannot be the direct object, and roses must be, despite the rearrangement of the noun phrases.

It is the student's knowledge (below the level of conscious awareness) of the true characteristics of the direct object that causes her to be confused about the proper case for the predicate nominative. In a sentence like "It was I" the word "I" is in object position immediately to the right of "was," and it has no preposition before it; every intuition the student has tells her that the word ought to be "me." It would help a good deal--if we *must* preserve this archaic shibboleth--if the student knew the classes of verbs that can take objects and that "be" was not among them.

I have never encountered a student who had been taught that direct objects are not introduced by prepositions, which is a truth; I almost never meet one who has not been taught that a direct object is the receiver of the action, and that happens to be a lie a great deal of the time.

7. I think that English teachers need to know how to analyze a body of linguistic behavior, and to do so using scientific techniques of investigation. Now, people were often very frightened by that idea in my classrooms, and I used to tell them that they're using the scientific method when they try to figure out why their tv set won't turn on. If the tv set won't turn on, you don't just call the repairman and blow $150, right? First, you formulate a hypothesis--there's something wrong with the electricity in this room. And if your lamp won't turn on either, you have confirmed that hypothesis. If your other electric appliances will come on, but your tv set won't, then you can formulate a second hypothesis--the trouble is at the station. You test that one by trying another channel. Only when you have exhausted all other possibilities do you come to the final conclusion that the problem is with your set itself and subject yourself to the inevitable expense and inconvenience of calling the repairman. Every-

body proceeds in that manner in solving problems in the everyday world; teachers need to learn how to take a body of linguistic behavior and apply to it exactly the same kind of analytic techniques.

I want to illustrate my point with an example of what happens when we *don't* do that, and of what happens when we *do*.

Because my position that there is no literacy crisis is well-known and much-reviled, I am frequently given essays by my colleagues, essays they have graded in their courses, covered with red as if they'd been through a MASH unit. These are meant to serve as illustrations of the *ungodly* way that today's students write. Down the margin of these essays it often happens that I find comments such as the following:

"This sentence has no verb."

"You left out your tense."

"Not a complete thought."

"Fragment."

"Awkward."

"Where is your auxiliary?"

... and so on. When I examine the essay carefully, however, I find that of perhaps twenty "errors," fifteen will be a single error: omission of the verb "be"; and that the student will be one whose dialect does not *have* the rule that whenever the predicate of a sentence is not a true verb (that is, whenever it is not a word we can add "-ing" to), we must insert a form of the verb "be" to carry tense and aspect. That is *not* a rule in quite a few dialects of English; thus, we get sentences like "Shakespeare the author of Hamlet" or "St. Louis a city in Missouri." Such sentences, turning up in essays in what may well be a bewildering variety for the teacher, should all be marked as the *same* deviation from the register required in the classroom, not as different ones. It is utterly confusing to the student to know at a gut level that he or she is doing a single thing, consistently, and to have that single thing given a dozen different markers of error, particularly when there is no one available to explain what all of those "errors" have in common...and that is what happens when the teacher doesn't look analytically at a body of language data.

What happens when the teacher does look at one that way? During the course of that experiment I referred to above, we looked at an awful lot of remedial essays--remedial being defined as "having failed the TSWE" (Test of Standard Written English). And in many of them there kept cropping up a structure which we could not understand, this "in which" thing. A student who was trying to write a sentence like "My father gave me the axe with which I chopped down the tree" would turn out "My father gave me the axe *in* which I chopped down the tree."

Those same students would never have said "My father gave me the axe that I chopped down the tree in."

At first we were bewildered, but when we had spent a little time subjecting these essays to linguistic analysis and asking "Why is this student's tv set not coming on?" it became clear that these students had worked out a misleading rule for themselves. They had noticed that in the formal register people were expected to front their relative pronouns, which was correct; they had noticed that people usually said "who" or "which" instead of "that," which was correct; and they had noticed that people put a preposition before the fronted relative pronoun--also correct. But instead of taking the preposition from their ordinary speech--"My father gave me the axe that I chopped down the tree with"--they had selected as an invariable marker of the academic style the sequence "in which," and were using it everywhere regardless of the context it appeared in. Once it was clear what was happening, it was very easy to explain to them, and we were able to put a quick end to that problem. But only by subjecting the phenomenon to careful analysis were we able to figure out what they were doing--i.e., using fronted "in which" as a marker of formal style--and to formulate an explanation in terms that would not be just another grammar incantation but would actually enable them to improve their academic performance.

8. The next thing I think that English teachers must know is the history of English; I really do think that's important. Not that they need to be able to conjugate verbs of Old English, I don't mean that; but they need to know very important facts that will allow them to answer questions about *why*? Linguistics does provide answers to many of those *why* questions, and students have a right to those answers. Elementary school children who are outraged when they find out that the numeral "two" has a "w" in it are entitled to be told that the "w" in that word was once pronounced, and that although our pronunciation has changed our spelling has not. That gets rid of the outrage; they may feel that the spelling *ought* to be changed, but at least they understand *why* it is as it is.

And something that students need desperately to be taught, for the health of their heads, is that English was once a speech considered fit only for the street; that the idea of its being used in education or literature was greeted with hilarity; that the languages which *were* used in prestige situations were Latin, Greek, and a little later, French, and that in an attempt to make English respectable and something more than just gutter talk, grammarians set out to demonstrate that English as a language had everything the grammar books claimed Latin and Greek had. Greek was described as having eight parts of speech; therefore, English had to have eight parts of speech to prove that English was just as good as Greek. That's why today we still teach students that English has eight parts of speech, not because it's true; no case whatsoever can be made for the claim. English doesn't have infinitives, nor does it have a present or future tense--but Greek and Latin had those; therefore, something had to be found to put in the grammar books to represent the English equivalents of those items. It

doesn't make the students any more eager to learn the eight parts of speech, but it does help to know how this situation came about and why.

It also helps very much for the students whose native language is now stigmatized to know that English was once in precisely the same situation; and it is helpful to the upper-class Anglo students, in the sense of improving their characters in the direction of a decent humility, to learn that English did not always enjoy the position that it has in the world today.

Teachers need to know what prepositions are. I've never yet found a class in which my students had not been taught the following grammar incantation: "A preposition is a word such as *at, in, for, to,* etc." This is of course a non-definition. Teachers who know the history of English will know that prepositions, by and large, have replaced the case markers which we lost when English lost its nominal inflections. That can be explained to students, and we can say: "Prepositions are the case markers of English," and that is in fact what they are. Given the noun phrase "the axe," you have no idea what the function of that axe might be; but if you put *with* in front of it, you recognize it as the *instrumental* case marker, and you know that it tells you that the axe is what was used to carry out the action of the verb--it is the "with" that tells you that, just as a case ending would, in Latin or in Greek--or for that matter, in Navajo or Kuneyaay.

9. Teachers need to know how *reading* really works, perceptually and cognitively. That's hard, by the way, because there isn't any way to do it well without studying things like neuroanatomy, the physiology of the optical system, and the theory of memory. I'll be the first to admit that that's hard, but teachers need to know it; and it's not any harder than a host of other things they had to learn during the course of their "general education." They need to learn that it is *physiologically* impossible for a student to read with understanding by looking at every letter of every word, or at every word of every sentence, and that what is crucial to reading well is knowing what *not* to look at. They need to know that because of the interaction between the perceptual system and the human memory, a student who does not read at approximately 220 words per minute cannot possibly understand or remember what is read; therefore, to tell students to read more slowly so that they will understand what they are reading is not sensible. A student who followed the instructions given in the traditional reading class would never be able to read--it is not physiologically possible, no matter how much practice one puts into it, no matter how much effort, no matter how much federal funding. People learn to read *despite* the instructions. This is well known to psychologists and psycholinguists and any number of other people, and it is criminal that it is not part of the obligatory knowledge of teachers who have to deal with reading--which is *all* teachers. These facts, and others of the same kind, I would like very much to put up on billboards out on our highways so that there could not possibly be a teacher who had not been exposed to them. Unfortunately, getting a federal grant for that project would be extremely difficult.

You may wonder why I am not saying that teachers must know how *writing* really works. One of the reasons is that I had to stick to thirteen things here on my list. Another is that there is ample evidence that improvement in reading will lead to improvement in writing automatically. It's possible to interfere with that, of course. No one is going to get brilliant writing when it is always on stupid subjects or under conditions of extraordinary stress and tension. But given half a chance, if a student's reading improves the writing will improve right along with that.

10. Teachers need to know what skills children already have in language arts at the age of six so that they can take advantage of that knowledge. Everything that we do in most language arts classrooms ignores what we know about the language learning abilities of children. Children at the age of six, pre-pubescent children, and young people--because their special ability begins to decay at puberty, but quite a lot of it hangs around for a long time--are superbly equipped to do inductive analysis of language. We respond to that by teaching them entirely *de*ductively, by giving them sets of rules to memorize, and then having them do exercises that are examples of the use of those rules. That is *exactly* upside down and backwards. We should be giving them data to analyze, and asking *them* to state the rules, and then letting them use those rules to write with. Real writing; not eighty sentences where they put the "-ed" on. That's *de*ductive, and nobody wants to do that. To fail to take advantage of the competency in language analysis which children have when they enter school, and which young people have, is to waste much of our efforts. With all the screaming about cost-effectiveness, I find this practice indefensible. And incomprehensible.

11. Teachers need to know how to teach their students about language that is used manipulatively. And by "language" I mean, I must emphasize one more time, nonverbal as well as verbal language. There was a day when everyone who pretended to the term "educated" had taken a course called rhetoric, and it didn't mean what rhetoric means today. It meant knowing how to spot a lie. It meant knowing how to spot a *liar*. Nowadays our children, our young people, all of us, are surrounded by floods of verbal stuff, and are for the most part completely vulnerable to it. Thus, anyone wanting to set up a political campaign or a television commercial does so in the confident knowledge that it will be easy to put things over on the population. When Proposition 5, a measure to require no-smoking areas in public places, came on the California ballot, and its proponents came to me for advice about what they ought to do--since they didn't have the millions the tobacco industry was providing to the opposition--I said "Start by getting rid of the slogan 'Clean Indoor Air!' because the associations that has for people are housework, and the toilet bowl, and spray disinfectant around, and menialness, and all those grubby things." They paid no attention to me. The other side knew all about using language manipulatively. The same thing happened with California's Proposition 13 cutting property taxes; people were told "Here's your chance to tell Sacramento where to go!" and they did not read any farther than that. Things of that kind

can only happen in a country where the citizen is not trained to spot manipulative language. Linguists can teach teachers to do that, and teachers need to be trained to teach that, so that the next generation will not be rhetorically illiterate. The current tentative emphasis on doing *something* with oral language is a healthy sign in that direction, I believe, given the hours we spend viewing television, listening to the radio, and so on, versus the hours we spend reading.

12. Teachers need to know *what linguistics is.* I don't have to say much about this. I just want to say that linguistics is a basic subject. If I had my way, it would not be taught at the university level, it would be taught in elementary school, in the first grade. It would be taught at a time when children are natural linguists--and, unlike the "parts of speech," it would not need to be taught over and over and over. Then we'd have time to let children do other things during the rest of their educational careers instead of wasting their time in mindless repetition of trivia. *Linguistics is the most basic of all subjects; if you want to go back to the basics, linguistics is as basic as you can get.* How to speak, how to understand, and added to that, how to read and write; that's linguistics.

13. Finally, thirteenth on my list: teachers, when faced with a linguistic problem, need to know where to look or who to ask for an answer. Most linguists are rather shy, you know, about offering advice. We've been trounced so much, and so often, by educators and by the media. We've been told so often to get out and stay out, that people are perfectly satisfied with phonics and see-say and they don't want to hear about "leave the kids' language alone," and they don't want to hear about morphemes...we hesitate. But if you have a language problem in the classroom, or you even wonder if you have a language problem, and you call up a linguist for help, he or she will usually be delighted to give it to you. Linguists will either tell you the answer, or tell you where to look for the answer, or go look for it themselves and call you back and tell you what it is. Linguists are a resource that teachers should make use of. I think it is unfortunate that they don't; I think that if you have a language problem in your classroom, and you call up Noam Chomsky and ask him about it, he'll be more than happy to help.

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